

ROMANI WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT IN HUNGARY

FACT SHEET 2006

OSI JOINT ROMANI WOMEN'S
INITIATIVE

Established in 2006 as a partnership between the NWP Roma Women's Initiative and the Roma Participation Program, OSI's Joint Romani Women's Initiative (JWRI) continues to support young Romani women's leadership, capacity building, advocacy and research.

"We cannot expect to attack poverty effectively and empower women economically if these women are suffering from poor health, inadequate schooling and skills, social exclusion, and gender-based discrimination."

*Jennifer Tanaka, Assistant Director,
Pakiv European Roma Fund in Budapest*

BACKGROUND

Due to the strict interpretation of data protection regulations, official statistics on the Romani population in Hungary are limited. The current Roma population is estimated to be between 550,000 and 600,000, or 5.5 to 6 percent of the total population. However, there are frequent debates about these numbers and about how to define Roma for statistical purposes.

Though a number of studies have been published on Roma in the Hungarian labor market, most lack a gender perspective. The marginalized position of Romani women in the labor market is not addressed in most surveys and publications. Furthermore, Hungary's long-term, national strategies for the Improvement of the Situation of Roma are not directed at Romani women, except for a plan to target Romani women in job creation programs.

In 2002, Romani representation in central government was institutionalized. Currently, there is a Roma Directorate within the Ministry for Youth, Family, Social Affairs, and Equal Opportunities, and each ministry has its own "Roma referent."

WHAT DO THE FACTS SAY?

- From the late 1980s through the early 1990s, approximately 40 percent of employed Roma lost their jobs, compared to approximately 10 percent of the majority population.
- Approximately 34 to 38 percent of Roma men and women are unemployed. An additional 25 percent of Romani women stay at home to care for the household or children.
- Approximately 40 percent of young Romani women (ages 19 to 34) have acquired vocational or secondary education, which facilitates entry into the labor-market.

WHAT IS DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN?

“Discrimination against women shall mean any distinction, exclusion, or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.”

(Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Article 1)

WHAT DOES THE EU RACE DIRECTIVE SAY?

“In implementing the principle of equal treatment irrespective of racial or ethnic origin, the Community should, in accordance with Article 3(2) of the EC Treaty, aim to eliminate inequalities, and to promote equality between men and women, especially since women are often the victims of multiple discrimination.”

(Council Directive 2000/43/EC of June 29, 2000 implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin, Preamble 14)

WHAT DO THE EXPERTS SAY?

- In post-socialist economic restructuring, low- or unskilled workers were affected the most. Romani women face additional disadvantages due to low educational levels and multiple gender and ethnic discrimination.
- Furthermore, entering the labor market for the first time or reentering the labor market after raising children, with no special support services, is difficult.
- Microcredit programs that support Romani entrepreneurs are insufficient in Hungary. The state-financed microcredit program has not been adequate for Romani entrepreneurs, and NGOs have had limited opportunities for supporting microcredit programs due to strict banking regulations.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

- Vocational training should be provided to women who have not completed elementary education. Job placement services should be provided to women who possess vocational or secondary education but remain unemployed.
- Special training should be provided to young women, ages 14 to 18, who have recently left school and are particularly vulnerable to unemployment.
- The laws requiring employers to offer jobs to women who are returning from maternity leave must be enforced.
- Centrally-administered government agencies must ensure access to jobs in public administration for Romani women and men.
- Access to microcredit programs for Romani women should be provided to encourage entrepreneurship.

MORE INFO:

<http://www.soros.org/women>

<http://cps.ceu.hu/>

<http://www.romawomensinitiatives.org>